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PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCE IN SOVIET MILITARY PROCURE--ETC(U)

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Arthur J. Alexander

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The United States Air Force

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Published by The Rand Corporation

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER N-1327-AF	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. AD-A118206	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Patterns of Organizational Influence In Soviet Military Procurement.		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Interim
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) Arthur J. Alexander		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) F49620-82-C-0018
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS The Rand Corporation 1700 Main Street Santa Monica, California 90401		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Requirements, Programs & Studies Group (AF/RDQM) Ofc, DCS/R&D and Acquisition Hq, USAF, Washington, D.C. 20330		12. REPORT DATE April 1982
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 13
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report)  UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)  Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)  No Restrictions		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Soviet Military Procurement      Military Research Decisionmaking Organization Theory Military Planning		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)  See Reverse Side		

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Although political choices have established the thrust of present Soviet weapons procurement policies, these choices and their implementation are conditioned by decisionmaking procedures and organizational relationships. The military maintains a near-monopoly of information and expertise on military affairs. This monopoly, coupled with a generation of alternative policies in military and civilian sectors that is conservative and incremental, requires that non-incremental change be stimulated by intervention from the political leaders. But, in order to preserve its stability, the collective leadership of the past 15 years is also conservative and incremental. We can therefore expect continuation of present trends until major change is broadly supported by the leadership. (Author)

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PREFACE

This Note was written for the "Soviet Strategic Competitiveness" study under Project AIR FORCE. It focuses on the part of Soviet military procurement behavior that is rooted in decisionmaking practices, organizational relationships, and bureaucratic routines. It asks the question, "Would outcomes be different if processes were different?" In addition to bringing together the results of a wide range of earlier research--by the author and by others--the conclusions draw on interviews conducted with persons having first-hand experience of Soviet practice. As with most studies of Soviet military affairs, the available evidence is fragmentary. The gaps are, necessarily, filled in a speculative though consistent manner. In many instances, therefore, the text is more assertive than may be warranted by the quality of the information. Moreover, because this Note summarizes and extends the results of a longer and fuller study, support of many propositions is even more abbreviated than in the larger work.<sup>1</sup> The Note is intended to bring the principal results and conclusions to a wider audience in a timely fashion.

<sup>1</sup>For a more detailed account of the evidence, see the author's *Decisionmaking in Soviet Weapons Procurement*, Adelphi Paper Nos. 147/148, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, Winter 1978-9.



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DTIC TAB	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
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Justification	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Availability Codes	
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PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCE IN  
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INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The growth in number and quality of weapons in the Soviet Union in recent years has drawn forth many alternative explanations. For example, some suspect that the leadership is controlled by a military-industrial complex. Others find explanations in bureaucracies running amok--inertia-ridden and uncontrollable. This study concludes that weapons procurement policies in the Soviet Union fundamentally originate in political decisions. But policy generation is carried out in highly bureaucratized institutions by people nurtured in a distinctive cultural and social setting that colors the way in which they participate in the process. Moreover, the political leaders, the bureaucrats, and the institutions are all shaped by historical influences, by military-political doctrine, by the "objective situation," and by internal political power relationships and accommodations, as well as by organizational arrangements, bureaucratic routines, and decisionmaking practices.

The central argument of this paper is that, although political choices have established the major thrust of present policy, both the choices themselves and their implementation have been conditioned by decisionmaking procedures and organizational relationships. Therefore, an understanding of decisionmaking (though incomplete) can yield insights (though partial) into the subject of Soviet weapons procurement and the military buildup of the past two decades.

The principal points of this argument can be briefly stated.

- o The military maintains a near-monopoly of information and expertise on military affairs and armaments, on strategic and tactical thought, and on the relationships between doctrine and weapons requirements.
- o This monopoly is coupled with conservative and incremental generation of alternatives in both military and civilian sectors that limit innovation and change.
- o Therefore, non-incremental change requires intervention by the political leadership.



- o But the collective leadership over the past 15 years has also been conservative and incremental so as to preserve its own stability.
- o We can expect continuation of present trends, until major change is supported by the leadership.

Before proceeding, it may be useful to briefly establish a setting in which to place the later discussion. A 200-year Russian history of expansionism coupled with invasions threatening the very existence of the country fostered a belief in the value of massive armies. A speech by Stalin in 1931 on Russian vulnerabilities, for example, continues to have echoes that are heard today.<sup>1</sup>

Those who fall behind get beaten. But we do not want to be beaten. No, we refuse to be beaten! One feature of the history of old Russia was the continual beatings she suffered for falling behind, for backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol Khans. She was beaten by the Turkish beys. She was beaten by the British and Lithuanian gentry. She was beaten by the British and French capitalists. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. All beat her--for her backwardness; for military backwardness, for industrial backwardness... Such is the jungle law of capitalism. You are backward, you are ~~weak~~--therefore you are wrong; hence you can be beaten and enslaved. You are mighty--therefore you are right; hence, we must be wary of you. That is why we must no longer lag behind.

Consistent with this outlook was the fact that on the eve of World War II, the Soviet Union had more tanks, more military aircraft,<sup>2</sup> and more submarines than the rest of the world put together.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, McGraw-Hill, 1951, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>Although Green and Fricker put the prewar number of Soviet aircraft at 12-15,000 versus 29,000 for the rest of the world, more recent and more complete estimates by Boyd note that the U.S.S.R. produced 21,000 aircraft in just the two-year period of 1939-40, and almost 13,000 in the eighteen months preceding the German invasion. William Green and John Fricker, *The Air Forces of the World*, New York, Hanover House, 1958; Alexander Boyd, *The Soviet Air Force Since 1917*, London, Macdonald and Jones, 1977, p. 98.

A modern doctrine that entertains the possibility of fighting and the desirability of surviving a war in the nuclear era requires equivalently large quantities of men and equipment. So pervasive is this view, that it would be surprising if the Soviet leadership could long hold to a policy inconsistent with its historically generated outlook. (Khrushchev's unsuccessful attempt to implement for long a doctrine of nuclear deterrence is a case in point.) However, I would argue that doctrine may not be a good predictor of detailed capabilities for several reasons: (1) doctrine is elastic--many force posture outcomes may be consistent with a given doctrinal statement; (2) doctrine may be prospective or forward looking; (3) it may be retrospective and rationalizing; (4) or it may reflect rhetorical custom or morale-building oratory. We cannot distinguish between these possibilities without the evidence of force posture and behavior themselves.

Since World War II, several phases of arms procurement can be discerned, the present phase dating back to around 1959. Each of these phases bears the stamp of the political leaders of the period. In the first post-war period, arms procurement declined sharply as Stalin reduced the size of the war-time military and cut production of conventional arms, except for the deployment of strategic bombers and first-generation jet fighters. This decision was dictated by the need to rebuild a shattered economy, and was rendered possible by the large inventory of left-over weapons. The second phase, reversing the post-war decline, began in 1950, partly in response to Korea, and continued until the end of the Korean War and Stalin's death in the 1953-54 period. The new leadership then sharply reduced armaments production and drastically cut back aircraft production from roughly 5000 per year to about 500. Large naval programs were cancelled and manpower levels were reduced throughout the late 1950s to pre-Korean levels. The ballistic-missile programs, however, initiated by Stalin, were carried forward by Khrushchev. Since around 1959, all sectors of Soviet military production have exhibited periods of rapid growth that aggregatively identify the military buildup that continues into the late 1970s. This growth, however, while continuous in the aggregate, has been neither continuous nor simultaneous for all types of weapons.

Re-equipment and R&D cycles, shifting tactical requirements, new technologies, and the gradual filling in of gaps have produced a complex array of growth patterns across services, functions, and weapons.

Despite the continuous growth of total expenditures since the late 1950s, at least two major political decisions appear to be behind the upward rising curves. In the early part of this period, Khrushchev had to deal with the Soviet split with China, Berlin tensions, the U-2 incident, and then the Cuban missile crisis. While Khrushchev probably acceded reluctantly to the needs generated by the situation (some of which were of his own making), the political leadership under Brezhnev in the mid-1960s accepted the military's doctrinal views and took steps to close the gap between the requirements following from these views and the nation's military capabilities.

The period since 1965 in the Soviet Union witnessed the installation of collective leadership, a return to orthodoxy in economics and planning, a regularization of bureaucratic routines in Party and government, stability of leaders and cadres, and an attraction to "scientific decisionmaking" that has encouraged a devolution of authority to the technocrats. Nevertheless, one must always be sensitive to the central analytical dilemma in understanding Soviet affairs: the approach of the institutions versus control by the Party. "The pressure from above is ruthless and unremitting, and evasion from below is resourceful and not unavailing."<sup>1</sup> Soviet weapons procurement is therefore best understood in a context that takes account of both political and organizational forces.

Within this context, I shall attempt to lay out some of the evidence for the central argument noted earlier.

#### MONOPOLY OF INFORMATION AND EXPERTISE

There are several organizational sources of monopoly. For example, the Central Committee Secretariat is the staff body for the Politburo. It supervises virtually every aspect of life in the Soviet Union, but it contains no department responsible for military

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<sup>1</sup>Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (2nd ed.), Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 386.

affairs or for defense policy. It has no institutional capacity to evaluate military proposals, or to put forth alternatives, except for technical issues concerning military production and R&D. Having said that, I should note that one or two individuals in the Secretariat, acting in their personal capacity, have participated in high-level policy deliberations. But these activities seem to be personal, not institutional, contributions. For example, from 1965-1976, D. F. Ustinov was the Party Secretary responsible for defense industry--just prior to his appointment as Defense Minister. It is likely that as Party Secretary he was called upon for advice beyond his titular responsibilities.

This institutional vacuum is enforced by restrictions against independent groups that could be counterparts of Rand, Brookings, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Congressional Committees, university researchers, or free-ranging journalists. Some research organizations like the Institute for the Study of U.S.A. and Canada may be a wedge into the military monopoly, but even here, the effort is dominated by retired or active military officers.<sup>1</sup>

Another element leading to a military monopoly on information is secrecy. Endemic and virulent secrecy is an historically Russian phenomenon, especially in military affairs. Khrushchev, for example, commented on a map exercise he attended where the enemy fleet was routed. Interrupting the briefer, Khrushchev asked, "Have you really assessed the situation correctly? If this were a real war and not just a map exercise, your ships would all be lying on the bottom of the sea by now. You haven't taken into account the missiles which the enemy would certainly be using against you from his shore defenses and his missile-launching planes." The perplexed briefer replied: "I've never heard of missile-launching planes before. You're telling me something entirely new." Khrushchev noted that the information must have been classified and ordered that the naval commanders be briefed on the weapons available to both sides.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Igor S. Glagolev, "The Soviet Decision-Making Process in Arms Control Negotiations," *Orbis*, Winter 1978, p. 770.

<sup>2</sup>Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers, Vol. 2, The Last Testament*, Penguin Books, 1977, pp. 59-60.

One way of breaking the monopoly is through special patron-client arrangements between individuals in the political leadership and in the military. I have looked for such cases, but have found few. Discipline is strong, especially after a line is adopted, and end-runs can be dangerous. Marshal Varentsov, for example, wrote a top secret letter to Khrushchev about poor management in missile production, lack of funds, and other deficiencies. Unfortunately for Varentsov, Khrushchev was not in Moscow at the time and the letter was handled by Politburo-member Suslov, who informed the Minister of Defense and the Ground Forces Commander of the complaints. Varentsov's superiors were naturally upset by his end-around run, and he suffered "very serious troubles" as a consequence.<sup>1</sup>

One way in which the military's monopoly on information and expertise may be broken is through the Defense Council. The Defense Council, apparently, is a sub-group of the Politburo; it includes the most powerful Politburo leaders and those members most intensely involved in defense matters. This group should certainly have the authority to call on whom it pleases for advice, but the independence and unbiased nature of this advice remains a question. One should not conclude, however, that the Party and the military battle as institutional adversaries with widely divergent values. Rather, I would emphasize differing organizational points of view deriving from rather distinct operational goals and organizational incentives.

#### CONSERVATISM AND INCREMENTALISM

Soviet organizational life is centralized, bureaucratic, and rigidly hierarchical. The sources of Soviet organizational behavior have been ascribed to climate, geography, serfdom, the Orthodox Church, Tsarist autocracy, communal village life, swaddling practices, and child-rearing patterns. And these factors point mostly in the same direction: to strong hierarchical relationships, the acceptance of

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<sup>1</sup>Oleg Penkovsky, *The Penkovsky Papers*, Doubleday, 1965, pp. 300-301.

overarching authority, and to conservative participation of individuals in official activities.

Powerful forces toward conservatism can be found, for example, in the Russian attitudes toward compromise and authority. The outcomes of initiative, personal or organizational, are always uncertain--new ideas or proposals are likely to run into opposition, and they are just as likely to fail because of objective deficiencies. Compromise, or the ability to accept reversal (by nature or by rivals) with equanimity, is therefore an essential complement to initiative. Compromise, however, assumes a rough equality between parties, a notion that is uncongenial among Soviet officials. A common issue in Soviet affairs is who is stronger, who is weaker. Such relations are between dominators and dominated, users and used. There can be no neutrals. Tests of power can be dangerous to losers. Since innovation can be risky, such tests are usually avoided, and so too is change.

In a widespread Russian view, one's impulses and emotions are powerful forces that need supervision by authorities outside oneself, rather than by self-control. This can be compared to attitudes of westerners, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries, who assert that their personal self-control legitimates their desire for autonomy. For the Russian, without firm leadership, there would be anarchy.

There are several forces emanating from organizational arrangements leading to conservatism and continuity--for example, the dual approval process for new weapons that requires review and concurrence through both the military and industrial hierarchy; or the influence of the rigid, planned economy. But one of the most important forces arises from the Soviet bureaucracy. Bureaucracies, once set in motion, are difficult to change. This is especially true of Soviet bureaucracies. The Soviet Union is a bureaucratized state, and was well on its way toward becoming one while Lenin was still in power, much to his revolutionary chagrin. "We have all sunk into a rotten swamp of bureaucratic departments," he wrote in 1922.<sup>1</sup> Many activities that are independent from government in the West, are managed in the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Roy Medvedev, *On Socialist Democracy*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1975, p. 294.

Union by government or Party organizations. Before a reader points to the growth of bureaucracy in countries near to home--in corporations, governments, universities, or even think tanks--I would assert that bureaucracy in the Soviet Union has a special character, one of the more important aspects of which is its centralization. It is as if the country were run by the postal service.

Because of all this, weapons procurement policies are most acceptable that minimize disruption and change, that maintain the continuity of existing relationships.

However, a continuity in aggregate budgetary growth and predictable political support can encourage program flexibility by military planners. The General Staff can approve and the services can accept the Strategic Rocket Forces' new missile program this year, knowing that the Navy will get its new anti-submarine carrier next year, and that the Army's tank production reached its desired levels last year.

#### INTERVENTION

Given the forces for continuity, how do things change? The strong tendencies toward conservatism and rigidity impel the political leadership into becoming the initiator of change, large and small; many such changes are typically accomplished through intervention in the standard decision process. Sudden alteration between two courses of behavior was described more than twenty years ago as "one of the distinctive characteristics of the Soviet system."<sup>1</sup> Shock treatment from the center was required to overcome the caution and apathy of the rank and file.

In economic affairs, major shifts in policy occurred in the adoption and subsequent abandonment of Lenin's War Communism and New Economic Policy, and Khrushchev's regional decentralization. In the military procurement area, political intervention took place in the development of jet fighters, ballistic missiles, and the hydrogen bomb, as well as in many smaller decisions.

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond Bauer, Alex Inkeles, Clyde Kluckhohn, *How the Soviet System Works*, Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 84.

Such interventions are often accompanied by the appointment of highly capable managers who are given the authority to do the job, often in a new organization, untied to the restraints of the existing bureaucracies and procedures. The technique has often been successful when applied to narrow, well-specified tasks; build an H-bomb, an ICBM, a truck factory. But attempts to achieve more complex goals by this method are more difficult to accomplish: develop an efficient computer industry; improve agricultural output. A limited project can be insulated from the pervasive forces of the society; but the larger the task and the more it is integrated into the rest of the economy, the more difficult it will be to move it from the tracks on which it is rolling.

#### COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Collective leaderships in general, and the present Soviet collective leadership in particular, are less likely to be vigorous interventionists than the Soviet one-man rulers of the past. Perhaps as a reaction to Khrushchev, the present leadership views past interventions as mistaken. Policy jumps of the past are now criticized as "subjective," intuitive, arbitrary, capricious. "Scientific decisionmaking" has been emphasized by Brezhnev and his colleagues. This calls for deliberation, expert advice, information, and analyses, which has encouraged devolution of authority to technocrats.

Balancing of power within the collective leadership requires caution and compromise; it can be marked by stalemate and immobilism. Because a dynamism of contending factors is unstable and generates a contest for supreme power, and because the complexity of policy is growing, the collective arrangement of leadership politics, in its search for stability, has become static. This is not accidental. In the early days of the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime, the Politburo developed mechanisms to attain political stability: e.g., prohibition of one person assuming Party and government leadership; stability of cadres; and a consequent reduction of personnel mobility. This policy has resulted in the astonishingly low attrition rate (including death and retirement) of 2.5 percent per annum of government leaders in the Council of Ministers between 1965 and 1975, compared with figures of



10-20 percent in earlier periods.<sup>1</sup> There is a concern to avoid "rocking the boat," resulting in hesitant, conservative decisions or their avoidance. However, over time, and especially since 1975, Brezhnev has managed to consolidate his authority over the rest of the leadership group, but he never attained the dominance of his predecessors. The collectivity of decisionmaking, therefore, continued.

One incident points to the clumsiness of the process. During a Russian-Egyptian meeting, evidence surfaced of an imminent coup d'etat in Somalia. Before the Russians could agree to send a warning to the Somalian government, agreement and signature was required from Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgorny, and probably of the entire Politburo.

This is not to say that politics is abandoned or that change is absent. But Soviet politics today requires a "balanced incremental perspective on many issues, with incrementalism the hallmark of the system."<sup>2</sup> Still, incrementalism over years can yield substantial change. The Soviet Union today is not the same as it was in 1965, and its military strength has not been stationary.

#### POSSIBLE FUTURES

We can expect continuation of present trends as long as current policies remain more or less successful; as long as the problems facing the Soviet Union remain more or less the same; and as long as the means for dealing with policy problems remain the same.<sup>3</sup> However, perceptions of success and of problems, and the acceptability of means depend on who is doing the perceiving. The first possible source of change therefore is in a reconstituted leadership, due to death, retirement, or political realignments. There is doubt, however, as to whether the successors to the political elite of the 1970s would find

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<sup>1</sup>T. H. Rigby, "The Soviet Government Since Khrushchev," *Politics*, XII (1), May 1977, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Jerry Hough, "The Party Apparatchiki," in Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths (eds), *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, Princeton University Press, 1971, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup>These points are made by Yehezkel Dror, "Muddling Through--Science or Inertia?," *Public Administration Review*, September 1964, p. 154.

it possible--or desirable--to alter the *status quo* unless forced by events. Recruitment into the leadership "presents a picture of remarkable traditional gradualism."<sup>1</sup> The elite is more homogeneous than ever before.

This group probably shares a common outlook on issues affecting Soviet security.<sup>2</sup> This outlook includes the notion of military power as a value; it does not regard military expenditure as a social cost, as is generally the case in the West. Since most of the participants in Soviet political-military decisionmaking probably share this outlook, day-to-day variation in leadership coalitions may have only a marginal effect on future weapons procurement.

Some attitudes of the leadership are deeply rooted in Russian history, but also result from the experience of a generation raised in the revolution, reaching pre-eminence in World War II, and nurtured under Stalin. Not until a post-war generation of leaders appears can we expect the Soviet Union to face the world and her own security much differently from the past 20 years. However, given the ages of the present team and their likely successors, a new generation could dominate elite circles within a decade.

A problem of growing proportions faces the present leadership, and is likely to be even more critical for its successors. This is the declining growth rate of the economy. With Soviet military expenditures absorbing more than double the U.S. share of national income, this sector represents a prime candidate for intensive review, if not outright budget-cutting. However, there are other options open to the Soviet economic managers than reducing weapons procurement. They can muddle through, squeezing out resources from the economy's considerable amount of "hidden reserves" by a host of incremental management adjustments. Reallocations may be made away from investment, agriculture, consumption, or other sectors. Economic reform of various hues may be

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<sup>1</sup>Seweryn Bialer, *The Soviet Political Elite: Stability, Legitimacy, and Change*, Report prepared for the U.S. Department of State, Columbia University, 1977, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas W. Wolfe, *The Military Dimension in the Making of Soviet Foreign and Defense Policy*, P-6024, The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, October 1977, pp. 35-40.

instituted, and indeed a number of experiments are currently under way. Or greater efficiency may be sought within the military-industrial sector itself with the excesses of present practices declining, but with the main trends in weapons procurement continuing. Consequently, even though the long-term economic decline will put pressure on military budgets, it is safe to predict that the trajectory of procurement expenditures will not be altered by shifts in the economic winds--unless economic problems reach crisis levels, unless a new leadership with different values emerges, or unless there is a significant change in the threat.

Changes in organizational relationships could also bring about policy shifts, but it is hard to conceive of drastic change coming from this direction. Nevertheless, one can look to a gradual breaking down of the military monopoly on information as contacts between high-level Soviet citizens and the rest of the world increase. Personal contacts, availability of foreign journals and reports, accessibility of Soviet officials to a wide range of outsiders are all growing. A senior American foreign service officer has written that Soviet conservatism and caution, and the need to mobilize internal support for new policies, make it difficult for policy-makers to back away from a chosen course of action. Western inputs must be felt early in policy deliberations to be effective. This implies the need for constant dialogue at all levels to transmit both straightforward information as well as political messages, and this dialogue is increasing.<sup>1</sup> But the conservatism and incrementalism of the organizations, the necessity for intervention to bring about major change, and the methods of collective leadership are all likely to endure.

In summary, decisionmaking practices and organizational dynamics are important, especially in the short-run when political activities are quiescent and changes in the threat are minor. But politics is at the center of Soviet decisionmaking. For a nation whose leaders have been nurtured in the belief that issues of economics, war, and international

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall Brement, *Organizing America to Deal with the Future*, P-6123, The Rand Corporation, June 1978, p. 5.

relations are, above all, political, the Soviet military buildup of the past 20 years can be explained and dealt with primarily in political terms.

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